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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, June 23, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CURDS AND WHEY." Information from the Bureau of Dairy Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

One of the Mother Goose rhymes which always puzzled me as a child was "Little Miss Muffet." You know,-

"Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet
Eating her curds and whey...."

and so on. I wasn't sure what a tuffet was, and I hadn't the faintest idea what curds and whey were or why anyone should want to eat them.

My first taste of junket pudding explained the "curds" when I was a little older; and I learned about another kind of curds when my mother made cottage cheese. But nobody happened to tell me what whey was, so for years I went on eating the curd in the bowl of junket and leaving the good whey in the bottom.

Well, apparently many other people have known as little as I did about whey,- not only the whey that is part of junket pudding, but the sweet whey that is left over in large quantities when cheese is made on the farm or in a cheese factory. During recent years the manufacture of commercial rennet casein has increased the volume of edible whey and further complicated the problem of disposal. The whey from many modern dairy plants and cheese factories is an expense to discard. Some of it is added to stock foods, but only a very small part of the country's production is condensed or dried for human food.

Chemists and nutritionists say that the nutritive value of whey is high. Let me read you what B. H. Webb, of the Bureau of Dairy Industry in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, told a group of food technologists last winter:

"Only the casein and fat of milk are removed in cheesemaking. The remaining solids, lactose, salts, and whey proteins are, in the light of the present science of nutrition, assuming a vital significance as foods. There is some experimental evidence which indicates that lactose may be of importance in calcium metabolism. If future research shows lactose to be a dietary necessity in this respect, the utilization of whey in food will be a simple means of providing lactose. Whey is a good source of calcium and phosphorus. It contains also practically all of the milk albumin. Perhaps the largest outlet for whey should be as a constituent of human food.

"The Bureau of Dairy Industry has been studying uses for whey in the hope that part of the five billion pound surplus could be turned into useful food through the development of new whey products."

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Maybe you'd like to hear 5 safety-first rules for the mushroom-picker. Rule No. 1 - Never eat a mushroom until you are sure of its identity. Rule No. 2 - Be sure all the mushrooms you collect are fresh. Rule No. 3 - In general, avoid the brightly colored kinds. Rule No. 4 - Don't pick the little baby button mushrooms. They are too young and undeveloped to show all their characteristics. At this stage it is easy to confuse poisonous with edible varieties. And finally here's Rule 5 - very important: Never use mushrooms that have a cup or sac-like envelop at the base of the stem. A cup-like structure of this kind, often called the "death cup", is a warning that the mushroom is one of the deadly poisonous varieties. Two of the deadly Amanita varieties, which account for nearly all the deaths from eating mushrooms, have this cup. It usually grows just under the surface of the ground. So when you are picking mushrooms, be sure to dig to the very base of the stem and look for the cup. A mushroom called the death angel, one of the very poisonous varieties, looks a good deal like one of the most delicious of edible mushrooms. But fortunately it has that telltale cup at the bottom of its stem.

A listener who is interested in growing mushrooms in her cellar asks for advice. She says she has a friend who has been very successful growing mushrooms not only in a basement but also in an old abandoned ice house. "If you have any information for a beginner at mushroom growing, will you send it to me," she says.

So I am sending her a bulletin called, "Mushroom Culture for Amateurs." Its 16 pages go into detail about how mushrooms suffer from drafts, how much moisture they need, what temperature is best for them, how to prepare the beds of manure they grow on, how to get good spawn, and so on -- all the details. Any other listener interested in growing mushrooms is welcome to a copy of that bulletin. Just write to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., and ask for Farmers' Bulletin No. 1587 -- "Mushroom Culture for Amateurs."

Last question. "Dear Aunt Sammy, Have you ever tasted a mushroom omelet? If you have, can you tell me how to make one?"

I'm delighted to oblige. A mushroom omelet is a plain omelet with a mushroom sauce. And here's the Bureau of Home Economics recipe for the sauce: 1 cup of mushrooms.....1 tablespoon of fat.....1 tablespoon of flour.....one-half cup of cream or top milk.....one-half teaspoon of salt.....and one-fourth teaspoon of pepper. First cut the mushrooms in small pieces. Then melt the fat and put in the mushrooms, the cream, the salt and pepper, and the flour which has been mixed with a little of the cold milk or cream. Cook for 5 minutes. Serve on your plain omelet.

Mushrooms are good broiled under the flame with butter, salt and pepper. They're good creamed on toast. They're good stuffed with savory bread-crumbs stuffing and baked. They're good in cream soup; as a sauce with steak; in chicken a la king; au gratin--but there. That's enough ideas to use up all those mushrooms our listener said were growing in her back fields.
